

MISCELLANY

The first popular shell book.

The first illustrated book, devoted entirely to shells, was Filippo Buonanni's (1638-1725) *Ricreatione dell' occhio e della mente nell' osservazione delle Chioccioline* (1681), which may be translated as, "Refreshment for the eyes and mind through the study of shells." Buonanni was born in Rome. He was a Jesuit priest, and a student of Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680). Kircher was a German Jesuit who became learned in many branches of the humanities and sciences; among these were deciphering hieroglyphics, optics, and astronomy. Kircher published on many subjects and became well known. He was called to Rome by Pope Urban VIII and was appointed professor of mathematics at the Roman college of the Society of Jesus in 1638, the year Buonanni was born. Like many of his learned contemporaries, he collected rarities of nature, art, and superstition, which he added to the college's earlier collections. In time the collection became known as the Kircher Museum. Buonanni succeeded to the post occupied by Kircher on the latter's death in 1680, and while he published his *Ricreatione* the following year, based on Kircher's shells, he did not become curator of the Museum until 1689. Those shells which remained extant were deposited, during the early part of the present century, in the Museo dell' Instituto di Geologia e Paleontologia in Rome.

Buonanni's classification is of nugatory interest. He promulgated many of the mythical beliefs of the earlier commentators. For example, he believed, like Aristotle, that "all [shelled mollusks] are generated spontaneously by the mud—oysters by dirty mud, and others by sandy mud," and that they were heartless and bloodless. He was convinced that both observation and authority supported spontaneous generation, though this erroneous theory had been disproved by two other Italians, Francesco Redi and Marcello Malpighi, some years before. The illustrations are reasonably accurate, but reversed.

Richard I. Johnson